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Monday, July 24, 2017 metro.us | t: MetroPhilly | f: MetroPhilly

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The Eagles begin training camp in South Philly on Monday morning. 25

Meet the boys from 'Dunkirk.' 18

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Philadelphia's new Office of Violence Prevention looks to coordinate the city's various efforts to stop crime. 4

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LENYON WHITAKER, MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

On Thursday, the Trump administration held a press briefing to introduce their tax-cutting budget plan, titled "MAGAnomics," and the internet had a field day turning it into a meme. Photoshop-savvy people of the World Wide Web had their own "unified theme" about everything the Trump Administration is doing and proved it as soon as the photos were released to the public. **metro.us/president-trump**

REPUBLICAN STRATEGY ON HEALTHCARE BILL IN FLUX

1 Republican Senate leaders aim to hold a procedural vote as early as Tuesday to take up legislation to repeal or replace Obamacare, but it remained unclear which version of the bill senators would vote on. President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans campaigned on a pledge to roll back former President Barack Obama's signature healthcare law, the 2010 Affordable Care

Act, also known as Obamacare. Senator John Thune, a member of the Republican leadership, told "Fox News Sunday" the initial vote was simply a way to open debate on the bill so that senators from both parties could offer amendments.

DEATH TOLL IN HUMAN SMUGGLING CASE RISES

2 At least nine men were found dead alongside dozens of people discovered inside a sweltering tractor trailer parked at a Walmart store in San Antonio, Texas, in what authorities called a case of "ruthless" human trafficking. Thirty people, many in critical condition and suffering from heat stoke and exhaustion, were removed from the trailer, which lacked air conditioning or a water supply, San Antonio Fire Chief Charles Hood said. Temperatures outside the vehicle topped 100 degrees Fahrenheit.Another person was found in a wooded area nearby and was also being treated, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Texas said. All the deceased were adult males, it said. Authorities initially said eight bodies were found in the trailer, but the U.S. Attorney's Office statement later said the death toll had risen to nine.

5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

CATCH OF THE DAY

3 The jaguar (Panthera onca) hunts a fish as it swims in its enclosure at Pessac Zoo on the outskirts of Bordeaux, France. Two jaguars — "Catalina" and "Mato" 2 and 1 years old respectively — are on display at the zoo on the outskirts of Bordeaux for the first time in Europe and have an enclosure which includes a pool where members of the public can observe their predatory aquatic abilities. GETTY IMAGES

CRACKDOWN PROMISED ON MEDIA LEAKS

4 Anthony Scaramucci, President Donald Trump's new communications director, said on Sunday that one of his first tasks will be to halt leaks and that staff on his team would be fired if the leaks do not stop. "If we don't get the leaks stopped, I am a businessperson, and so I will take dramatic action to stop those leaks," Scaramucci said on "Fox News Sunday." Scaramucci told CBS's "Face the Nation" that leakers are "actually un-American," and that he would lead a team meeting on Monday. The hiring of Scaramucci brings a combative style to the White House press office as President Donald Trump lashes out at probes into whether his campaign colluded with Russians during the 2016 campaign.

ARMY SERGEANT CHARGED WITH TRYING TO HELP ISIS

5 A U.S. Army sergeant stationed in Hawaii has been indicted on charges of trying to provide material support to Islamic State, allowing the case to move to a federal trial without a preliminary hearing, officials said. Ikaika Erik Kang, 34, is being held in jail and is scheduled to appear in court in Honolulu on Monday to face charges. He was arrested on July 8. The indictment, from a U.S. grand jury, accuses the military air traffic controller of four counts of attempting to provide material support or resources to a "foreign terrorist organization." Islamic State, a militant group that has claimed responsibility for suicide bombings and other attacks on civilians around the world, controls territory in Syria and Iraq. Earlier this month, Iraq's prime minister declared victory in a battle to drive Islamic State out of the city of Mosul.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY: KUSHNER TO SPEAK TO SENATE INTELLIGENCE PANEL ON RUSSIA PROBE

President Donald Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner, will be interviewed by staff of the Senate Intelligence Committee in a closed session on Monday. According to The Washington Post, Kushner is expected to answer the committee's questions and not invoke his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination, according to a person familiar with Kushner's thinking.

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Also, remember that merely reporting your accident to an insurance company **does not** stop the clock from running on your rights!

It can sometimes take time to properly identify and locate the parties responsible for your injury. If your lawsuit does not name those parties correctly, before your deadline expires, **you lose your rights forever.**

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Police monitor protestors outside City Hall on April 30, 2015. GETTY IMAGES

Fixing Philly: An organized effort to prevent violence

With a new Office of Violence Prevention, the city looks to cut waste and coordinate crime fighting efforts.

HAYDEN MITMAN
@MetroPhilly
letters@metro.us

Every year, the City of Philadelphia spends about $60 million on anti-violence programs.

But, according to Shondell Revell, head of Philadelphia's new Office of Violence Prevention, these efforts have largely been separate endeavors that haven't always been very productive for the community.

"You have several in the community that haven't helped the community at all," Revell said to Metro.

Instead, he said that, without intergovernmental organization, these programs can be ineffective, inefficient and often, work in something of a bubble by never coordinating efforts in ways that could make them much more effective.

"Everyone works in a silo," he said. "We can't just look at high crime areas and ignore low crime areas."

Revell, who was formally appointed the as executive director of the new office last week, has previously served as executive director of the Youth Violence Reduction Partnership as well as a correction officer with New York State Division for Youth, a social worker with Youth Opportunities Philadelphia, and as the senior manager for the Philadelphia Anti-Drug Anti-Violence Network.

Back in 2007, while working as a case worker for juvenile offenders, Revell was interviewed by CNN, where he talked about addressing a cycle of violence that youth offenders can fall into.

As a father of three daughters, the 48-year-old Revell said that he has long worked in violence prevention in the hopes of making the world a better place, especially for his daughters, and he hopes that this office could help him achieve that goal.

"I'm trying to change the world. I'm trying to change their world," he said. "This is a very holistic approach."

Revell said that his office is starting to look at the various anti-violence programs that get city funding — he said it was too early to discuss just which ones specifically — in order to see what works and what doesn't. Then, he said, the plan is to determine if some could benefit from additional funding or if the programs are a waste of funds.

"Things haven't always worked the way that we want them to work," he said. "And, now, we are addressing that ... I'm excited about it."

Along with evaluating how the city is spending its tax dollars on anti-violence initiatives, Revell said he will be going into communities and talking to people most effected by the crimes these initiatives are meant to address.

"They are going to complain, but you're going to hear a lot of truth in that," he said of meeting with residents. "I'm going out there to find out what's going on."

Also, Revell said, he hopes his office's efforts will be able to root out any ineffective elements of existing anti-violence initiatives in an effort to cut out waste and help give those who are making a positive impact on the community the ability to have more success.

"We have a lot of good service workers who are being mismanaged," said Revell.

Revell said that his office will also be working with City Council's recently created Special Committee on Gun Violence Prevention. The office will also be researching, what Revell called "upticks" in criminal activity and the office plans to look at long-term solutions to violence, while providing regular monitoring and follow up on these initiatives.

Overall, Revell said he doesn't want to rush anything. Instead, he's hoping that through planning, review and coordination, his office can help improve anti-violence efforts throughout the city and make the necessary changes.

"I'm trying to change the world. I'm trying to change their world."

Shondell Revell

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Thousands of injured workers may be eligible for new benefits

WRITTEN BY
Amy Smith

A game-changing Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision just turned modern workers' compensation law on its head. The ruling, handed down last month, could potentially unlock benefits for thousands of injured workers in the state.

The decision eliminated an entire section of the law; a 1996 provision that allowed the American Medical Association (AMA) to carry out its own guidelines to measure the degree to which workers had been injured. Each assessment churned out a corresponding percentage reflecting the severity of injuries. Workers who fell under 50 percent were considered only partially injured—and then subjected to their benefits being capped at 500 weeks.

The problem?
The Pennsylvania Supreme Court now says the provision is unconstitutional, slashing it entirely from the law. Translation: the AMA's guidelines can no longer be used to limit benefits for injured workers.

"Injured workers no longer have to attend IRE exams at the request of the workers' compensation insurance carriers and can no longer have their wage-loss benefits capped through such exams," says Alfred Carlson, Esq.

The now-eliminated provision gave insurance companies the right to mandate impairment rating evaluations (IREs) for injured workers. As described above, the doctor would then use those AMA guidelines to determine the severity of the injury.

But, as many had suspected, these guidelines were inherently flawed. For starters, they were created and maintained with essentially no legislative oversight; the Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision is huge because it recognizes just that. Among other things, the AMA was not required to explain how the guidelines were formed or what shaped them. As such, the IRE process had gone largely unregulated for over 20 years. Workers whose injuries fell short of the 50-percent mark suffered the most, getting slammed with capped benefits.

The new ruling stems from a former Derry Area School District employee who, a decade ago, badly injured her knee on the job. Thanks to the flawed IRE process, her injuries landed at just 10 percent—majorly impacting her benefits.

"In the Supreme Court's opinion, the Pennsylvania Constitution prevents the General Assembly from passing over to another body de facto control over matters of policy," says Carlson. "With respect to IRE evaluations, the Court held that the General Assembly delegated this control to the American Medical Association, and therefore such evaluations are unconstitutional."

Exactly how the ruling will play out is yet to be seen, but experts say that a reinstatement to total disability may be possible for many injured workers, even if the 500-week

period has already expired. In other words, folks who've received partial disability benefits since 1996 might be able to set things right. (Just be aware that cases that settled for a lump sum with a compromise and release agreement will unlikely be reopened.)

Martin Law has been protecting workers' rights for close to 40 years. If you were assigned an impairment rating in the past, reach out to the Martin team today to see if a petition can be filed to reinstate your benefits. With offices in Philadelphia, Malvern, Reading, Bristol and Allentown, their skilled attorneys know workers' compensation law in and out, and they're ready to stand up for your rights.

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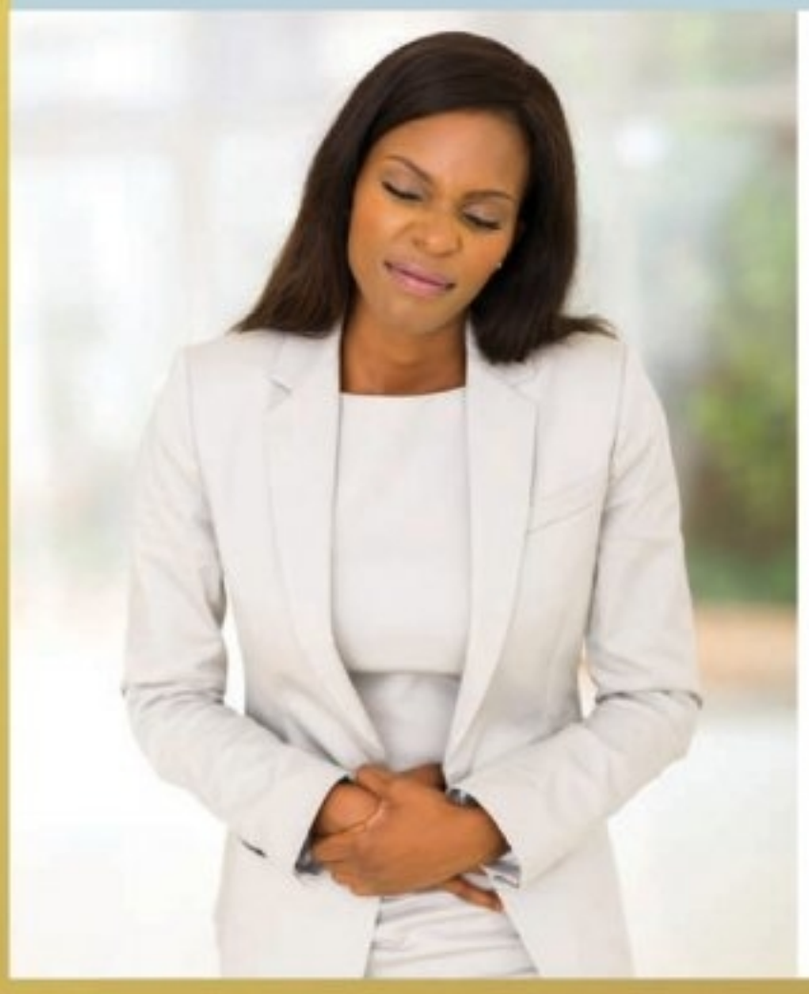

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Study participation is voluntary.

For more information please contact Eileen at 484-380-4861 or eileen.davies@ctcphiladelphia.com

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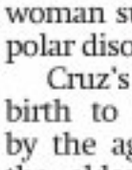
From homelessness to a PhD, Philly woman flips the script

One woman's story shows how overcoming obstacles can be possible for anyone.



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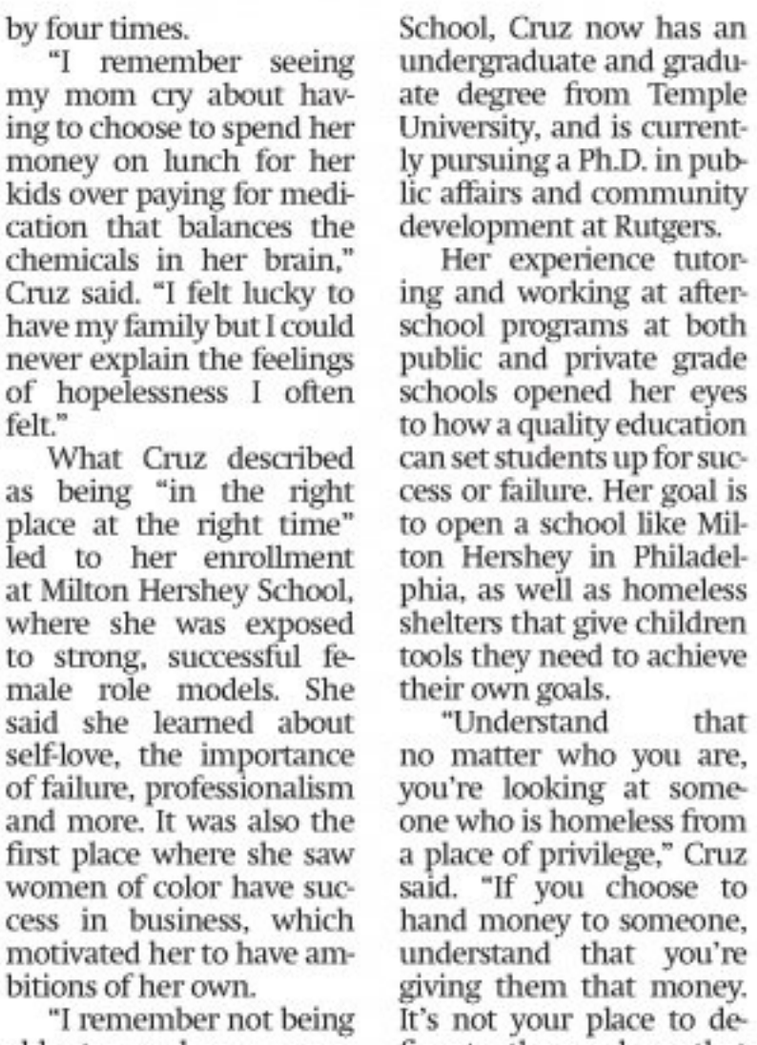

Alexandra Cruz is currently pursuing a Ph.D. PROVIDED

How's this for fighting the odds? One Philly woman now working on her doctorate was, just years ago, literally homeless.

Alexandra Cruz never had a place to call home for a large portion of her childhood, sleeping on couches and attending six different schools by the age of 11.

"Had my mom had any assistance from the fathers of her children, we may have been able to combat the threat of homelessness," Cruz said. "My mother was always working more than one job and paying for childcare, rent, clothing for growing children, etc., which created astronomical bills and stress for a woman suffering from bipolar disorder."

Cruz's mother gave birth to her third child by the age of 19 and as the eldest, Alex was always the forced babysitter. She thought her future was dismal.

"I was forced to become an adult before I even hit puberty. My sisters were always my responsibility, regardless of where we were. Having to constantly worry about whether or not your mom ate today is something that makes you feel enslaved to homelessness," Cruz said. "She maxed out a number of credit cards just to keep us fed and would skip meals to make ours stretch," Cruz said. "She was supported to an extent by family members [including five siblings], but she wasn't always comfortable telling them exactly where we were struggling."

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 24 million children, or 1 out of 3, live at home without their biological father, which increases the risk of poverty by four times.

"I remember seeing my mom cry about having to choose to spend her money on lunch for her kids over paying for medication that balances the chemicals in her brain," Cruz said. "I felt lucky to have my family but I could never explain the feelings of hopelessness I often felt."

What Cruz described as being "in the right place at the right time" led to her enrollment at Milton Hershey School, where she was exposed to strong, successful female role models. She said she learned about self-love, the importance of failure, professionalism and more. It was also the first place where she saw women of color have success in business, which motivated her to have ambitions of her own.

"I remember not being able to go home sometimes because of my mom being homeless again," Cruz said, referring to frequently babysitting her sisters. "I often was blind to what was happening at home because Milton Hershey School gave us the opportunity to be kids and enjoy what was left of my adolescence."

With a scholarship from the Milton Hershey School, Cruz now has an undergraduate and graduate degree from Temple University, and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in public affairs and community development at Rutgers.

Her experience tutoring and working at afterschool programs at both public and private grade schools opened her eyes to how a quality education can set students up for success or failure. Her goal is to open a school like Milton Hershey in Philadelphia, as well as homeless shelters that give children tools they need to achieve their own goals.

"Understand that no matter who you are, you're looking at someone who is homeless from a place of privilege," Cruz said. "If you choose to hand money to someone, understand that you're giving them that money. It's not your place to define to them where that money should be spent or on what. They may need food, they may need a shelter, they may need a fix to get them through the night without contemplating suicide. Judging someone else's struggle doesn't make you a good person ... [but] if you have an extra dollar to spare or some food, by all means do so."

Research lighting the way for PTSD recovery

WRITTEN BY
Amy Smith

If you're one of the nearly eight million Americans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), you're likely all too familiar with the ways it impacts everyday life. Anyone who's lived through a traumatic event—from war to sexual assault; a car crash or a disaster—can fall victim to PTSD. The symptoms, which typically include reliving the event through flashbacks and painful memories, are debilitating. This often leads to a constant state of fear and unease, making it almost impossible to live your best life.

While psychotherapy can be an effective go-to treatment, groundbreaking new research looks to be a ray of hope for long-term recovery. This means clinical trials could be the pathway to novel breakthroughs and game-changing treatment options. For example, researchers at the University of California, San Diego recently found potential physical signs of PTSD in the brain. Meanwhile, a team from Stanford Medicine is using brain scans to predict which patients will be more receptive to a commonly used form of psychotherapy.

"It is very encouraging that PTSD is starting to get the attention it deserves, providing hope for people who had previously had only limited options for treatment and often unsatisfactory results," says Dr. Howard Hassman.

Clinical trial participants, without whom this kind of research wouldn't exist, are a key piece of the puzzle. They're the ones who help doctors and pharmaceutical companies carry out the steps needed to bring new treatments to life.

The Hassman Research Institute (HRI) team is doing just that at. Located just 20 minutes away from Philadelphia in Berlin, NJ, this forward-thinking group was built on its dedication to improving the quality of life. They're also at the forefront of innovative new PTSD research. What's more, HRI's skilled and compassionate staff truly care about each and every patient.

Study participants are provided with transportation, at no cost, to and from all visits. No insurance is needed, and all study-related medical tests and medications are provided without a charge. This eliminates all out-pocket-costs, including co-pays. The best part is that patients might have the chance to participate in a study that has a successful outcome for them and others.

This, in turn, can have a ripple effect that benefits future patients.

"Medical advancement cannot proceed without the selfless and critical involvement of study participants," says Dr. Hassman. "The hope is that the work they put in today will lead to future treatments not only for themselves, but also many thousands of people they may never meet."

HRI conducts comprehensive physical and mental health research that extends far beyond PTSD. This includes research around Alzheimer's disease, depression, diabetes, ADHD, pain management, asthma and much more.

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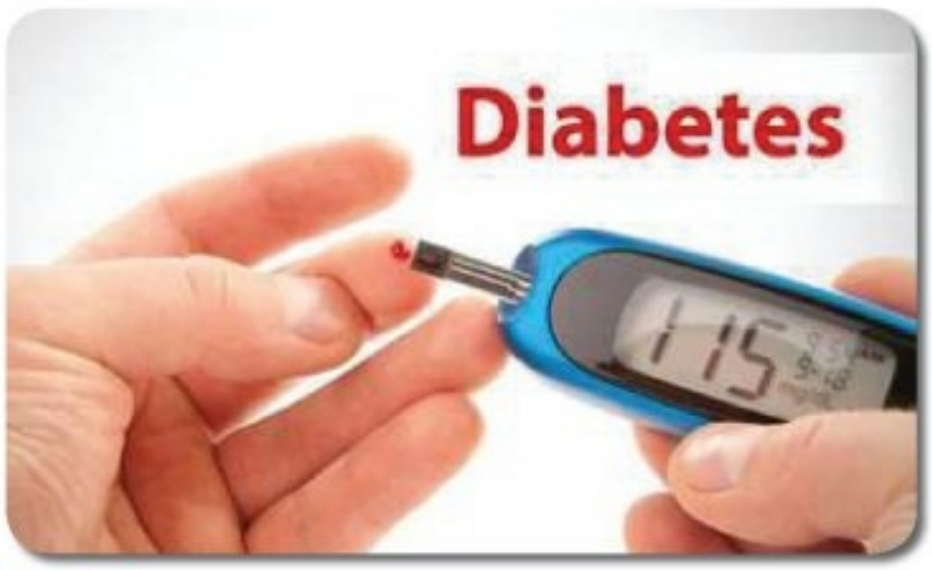

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The president can be indicted, newly discovered legal memo says

A conservative constitutional law expert made the argument decades ago, during the investigation into President Clinton.

MICHAEL MARTIN
@MetroPhilly
letters@metro.us

As the investigation into President Trump and Russia broadens, a question has been raised: If crimes are uncovered, could Trump be indicted? The widespread conclusion is no; a sitting president is immune from prosecution.

But a decades-old legal memo, written by a conservative, says he can.

The memo, recently uncovered by The New York Times, was commissioned by independent counsel Kenneth Starr during the investigation into President Bill Clinton in the '90s. Starr hired a conservative constitutional law and ethics expert, Ronald Rotunda, to write the memo in spring 1998, after a grand jury concluded there was enough evidence to indict Clinton.

"It is proper, constitutional and legal for a federal grand jury to indict a sitting president for serious criminal acts that are not part of, and are contrary to, the president's official duties," the memo reads. "In this country, no one, even President Clinton, is above the law."

Using that argument, the memo also concluded that it was constitutional to try the president even for minor, unimpeachable crimes without waiting for the end of his term, because statutes of limitation for some offenses would run out.

Ironically, the example Rotunda gave was the president punching a heckler at a rally.

> *"It is proper, constitutional and legal for a federal grand jury to indict a sitting president for serious criminal acts that are not part of, and are contrary to, the president's official duties."*
> Ronald Rotunda's memo

Ultimately, Starr chose to let impeachment hearings go forward instead of recommending indictment.

The Constitution doesn't specifically say that a sitting president can't be prosecuted. The courts haven't ruled on it. But the belief is based on the Constitution's "structural principles" — a trial would prevent the president from fulfilling the constitutional powers of the executive branch. That would result in a crisis of governance, preventing the government from functioning as it's intended.

But Rotunda argued that the 25th Amendment — a guideline to replace the president in case he becomes incapacitated, which has also been mentioned frequently in reference to Trump — was intended to prevent the executive branch from being compromised in that way.

Donald Trump could be indicted while president, according to a recently uncovered memo drafted in 1998. GETTY IMAGES

This is not the only time the memo's conclusion has been expressed. In 1974, the special counsel on Watergate received a memo from his staff saying it was possible to indict President Richard Nixon.

In the Trump/Russia investigation, if special counsel Robert Mueller uncovers enough evidence to indict President Trump and wants to empanel a grand jury, he must follow Justice Department procedures to move forward. One of those specifies the person who could overrule him: Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who was appointed by Trump.

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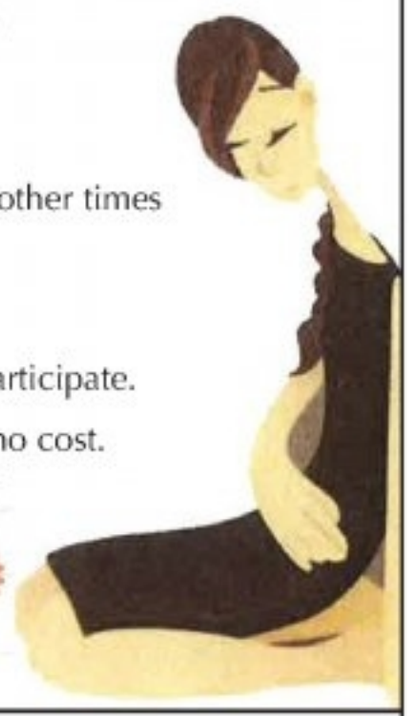

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US Cuba tour operators gird for Trump travel crackdown

President Donald Trump in June rolled back parts of Barack Obama's historic opening to Cuba, saying his predecessor negotiated a "terrible and misguided deal."

U.S. tour operators that send Americans to Cuba are banding together to try to limit damage to business from tighter restrictions on travel to the communist-run island expected in September from the Trump administration.

The revised approach includes stricter enforcement of a longtime ban on Americans going to Cuba as tourists. Among changes are limiting visits to 12 existing categories of non-tourist travel and a ban on the use of hotels and other facilities owned by Cuba's military.

Cruise ships are permitted, the administration said, but not independent visits by solo travelers and families under the popular people-to-people travel category which Trump charged was being used to violate the tourist ban.

Many Americans took Trump's message to mean travel to Cuba, except on cruise ships, was again off limits, U.S. tour operators said. It is a misconception they hope to change with a trade group formed in the last month to influence the debate on Cuba and help would-be visitors navigate new rules.

"We need to share information and speak as a united voice on issues that are important to us," said Cuba Cultural Travel's Michael Sykes, who founded the group American Tour Operators in Cuba (ATOC) that now counts more than 30 U.S. companies.

Tourists take in the sites from a double decker tour bus of Havana. GETTY IMAGES

Trump's move to roll back Obama policies introduced after the 2014 U.S.-Cuban detente has yet to have a significant impact on the number of U.S. travelers visiting the island, according to a survey of a dozen U.S. tour operators by Reuters.

But travel companies fear a hit on future demand from Trump's combative tone and regulations, with some concerned it could even spook U.S. banks that help them do business with Cuba.

"We can work with the new rules with minimal changes, but a pall has been cast over the business and that has me worried going forward," said Steven Cox, president of Alabama-based tour operator International Expeditions, an ATOC member.

"Many American travelers are not so well informed and believe that travel to Cuba is being shut off and that just isn't true," he added.

Some 300,000 Americans, excluding those of Cuban descent, visited Cuba in the first six months of 2017, more than twice last year's number during the same period, according to the Cuban government. Of those, 40,000 traveled outside organized groups using online booking, tour companies estimated, the majority under the people-to-people category.

"Many American travelers are not so well informed and believe that travel to Cuba is being shut off and that just isn't true."

Cox

Operators said they had been inundated with inquiries from clients worried about future travel and are revising itineraries to avoid Cuban hotels operated by the military.

REUTERS

Harold Slutsky, DMD ORTHODONTIST

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White House Communications Director Anthony Scaramucci is new on the job. GETTY IMAGES

TRUMP'S AMERICA

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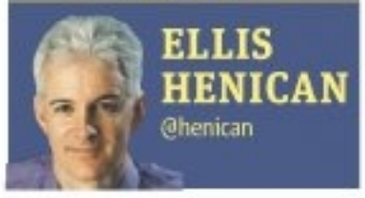
OPINION



ELLIS HENICAN
@henican

There's a telling exchange in "101 Dalmatians," the late-1990s Disney TV series. It comes in the episode "Bad to the Bone/ Southern Fried Cruella." Mooch, the bully dog, is taunting roly-poly Rolly, when one of Rolly's friends speaks up.

Spot: You know what happens to bullies?

Mooch: Yeah. They get all the good stuff.

I'm not sure if Mooch-the-pooch inspired Anthony Scaramucci, the New York hedge-funder and feisty Trump defender whose nickname he shares. Maybe it was the other way around. Either way, Mooch-the-human has definitely landed on familiar territory as the latest pugnacious mouthpiece for President Donald Trump.

Right away, let's get one thing straight. Scaramucci is not the new White House communications director. He may have the title. He may have the briefing-room microphone. But in this tumultuous White House, only one man directs the communications. He uses his thumbs a lot. His initials are DJT. Everyone else, the Mooch included, just arrived from Office Temporaries.

Judging by his performance on the Sunday shows, Scaramucci thinks Trump is perfect and all complaints are mainstream-media narratives or more fake news. And the Mooch has no intention of dwelling in the past. Shrugging that "past views evolved," he spent the weekend sweeping smoldering stink bombs from his own Twitter account.

There, he was praising Mitt Romney for staying out of the "Trump spectacle." He was declaring his stances "for gay marriage, against the death penalty, and pro-choice," all verboten to the Trump base. He was announcing Jeb Bush "will make a great president" and "I like Hillary. Have to go with the best athlete. We need to turn this around." For good measure, the Mooch even fretted about global warming, backed gun control and said of Trump's biggest promise: "Walls don't work. Never have, never will."

Things don't end so well for Mooch or for Rolly in that "Dalmatians" episode. Rolly joins a gang for protection. Mooch isn't nearly the fighter he pretended to be. And, well, I don't want to blow the ending for you. But before he makes any plans for the distant future, Mooch-the-human might want to go on YouTube and look it up.

Metro columnist Ellis Henican is a veteran journalist, best-selling author and frequent commentator on CNN and other TV networks. Follow him on Twitter @henican.

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The Shore's bike-ability beats Philly

Bike lanes and road safety are in far better shape on the Shore, a columnist discovers.

RANDY LOBASSO

Analysis

You may be surprised to hear that the Jersey Shore is quickly becoming one of the premier spots in our region to ride your bike, either on a boardwalk or trail for fun, or on the street for transportation. On my recent trip to Avalon, New Jersey, I was somewhat shocked to find as many people in town riding bikes as driving cars to get around, and some pretty decent bicycle infrastructure to boot.

There are seven miles of bike lanes on Dune Drive, connecting Avalon to Stone Harbor. And on any given afternoon, families could be seen riding bicycles in packs between area restaurants, beaches and Wawa.

People in cars are shockingly accommodating to bicyclists and pedestrians, too; correctly yielding to people on foot and bicycle, whether or not there was a stop sign in their path, and always driving really slow.

And while these factors have made the streets welcome to cyclists, Stone Harbor is actually about to go a bit further. The borough recently received Cape May County Open Space funds to add a painted buffer to its section of bike lanes and install new bike parking in the business district.

But Avalon and Stone Harbor are not outliers. From north to south, gigantic sections of New Jersey's shore has, in more recent years, become reconstructed to better accommodate a growing bicycling population.

After Hurricane Sandy destroyed sections of the Jersey Shore in 2012, the state's Department of Transportation fast-tracked 12 miles of Route 35 in Northern Ocean County, and built according to the state's Complete Streets policy. The result: the longest-run stretch of bicycle facilities on a New Jersey urban highway along the Barnegat Peninsula, which will be completed in 2018. Residents took so well to the infrastructure that a new contra-flow lane on East Avenue, in Bay Head, New Jersey, went in just this year.

In Atlantic City, a two-way buffered bike lane on Maryland Avenue now connects Brigantine Boulevard to Adriatic Avenue, a project in accordance with Atlantic City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

A gigantic, 11-mile route connecting Cape May County Zoo to the town of Cape May will be completed later this summer, consisting of a multi-use path with final connections to North Cape May and Cape May via a bike lane.

Egg Harbor, Wildwood, Toms River and Somers Point are all in the process of either constructing or completing bike trails that will take people to the beaches and connect people between towns.

Getting to the Shore with a bike is pretty easy, too. The Atlantic City Line, leaving from 30th Street Station, allows bicycles on train cars at all times. And New Jersey Transit motor coach buses can accommodate up to three bikes, if space is available, too. All this information about getting your bike to the Shore is available on the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia's bike maps page.

I promise the state of New Jersey has not commissioned me to write this bicycling column. I really am that impressed with the Garden State's commitment to bicycling. And while I don't think I have to convince Philadelphians to head down the Shore with their remaining summer, if you do plan on doing so, bring your bicycle.

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Official: Trump open to signing Russia sanctions legislation

Congressional Democrats said they had agreed with Republicans on a deal allowing new sanctions targeting Russia, Iran and North Korea in a bill that would limit any potential effort by Trump to try to lift sanctions against Moscow.

Russian President Vladimir Putin GETTY IMAGES

The White House said on Sunday that U.S. President Donald Trump was open to signing legislation toughening sanctions on Russia after Senate and House leaders reached agreement on a bill late last week.

"We support where the legislation is now and will continue working with the House and Senate to put those tough sanctions in place on Russia until the situation in Ukraine is fully resolved and it certainly isn't right now," White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders told ABC's "This Week with George Stephanopoulos" program.

A White House official said the administration's view of the legislation evolved after changes were made, including the addition of sanctions on North Korea.

The official said the administration "supports the direction the bill is headed, but won't weigh in conclusively until there is a final piece of legislation and no more changes are being made."

Anthony Scaramucci, Trump's new communications director, said Trump had not yet decided whether he would sign the bill.

"My guess is ... that he's going to make that decision shortly," Scaramucci told CNN's "State of the Union."

Trump has faced resistance from Republican and Democratic lawmakers for his pledge to pursue warmer relations with Moscow. His administration has been bogged down by investigations of possible ties between his 2016 campaign and Russia. Trump has said his campaign did not collude with Russia.

With the bill, Republicans and Democrats are seeking to punish Russia for its 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and for meddling in the 2016 presidential election. Russian President Vladimir Putin has denied any interference in the U.S. democratic process last year. REUTERS

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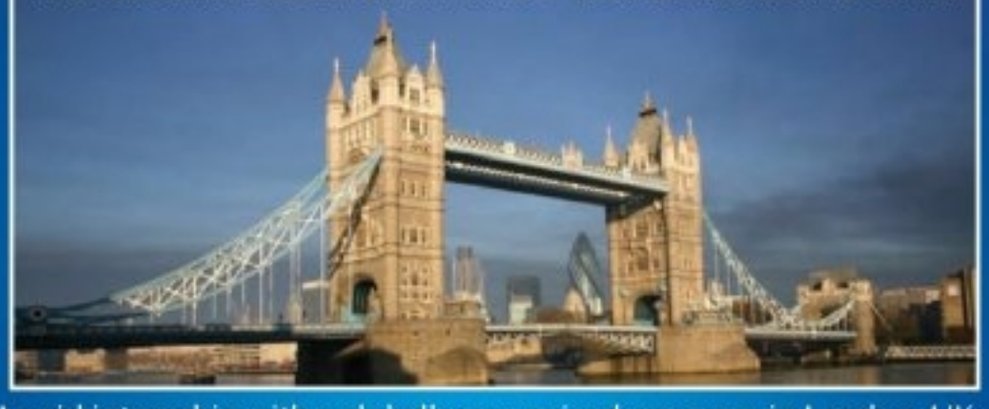

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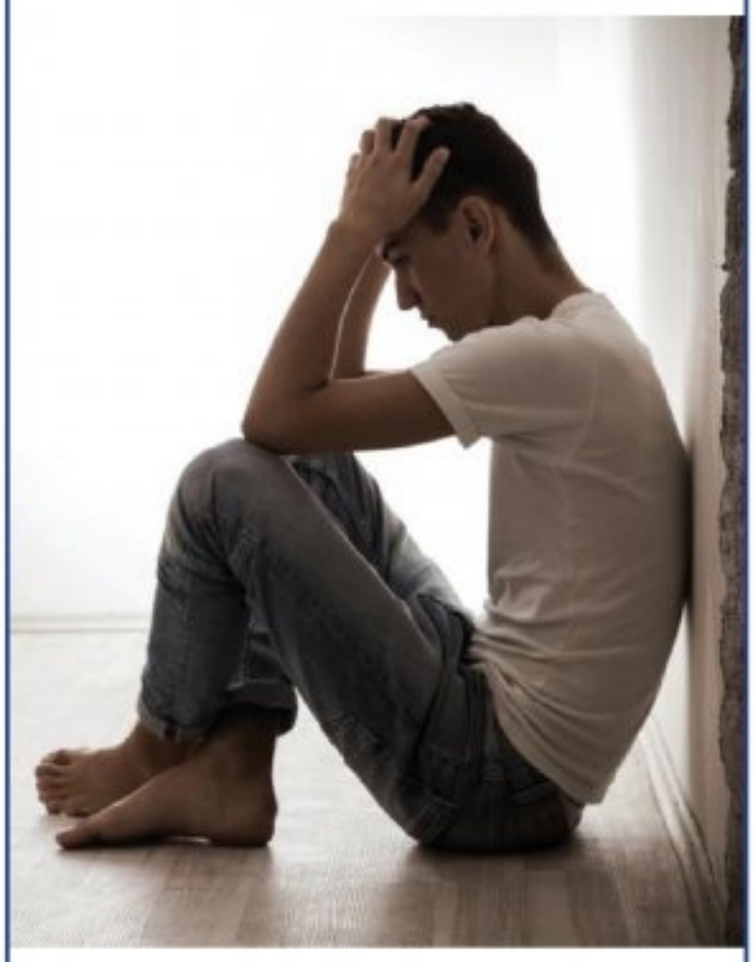

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Team Sky rider Christopher Froome (yellow jersey) of Great Britain rides along the Avenue des Champs-Elysees en route to winning the Tour de France in Paris, France on July 23, 2017. GETTY IMAGES

Near-perfect Froome claims fourth Tour title

The Briton suffered a few wobbles throughout the race but was always in control over the three weeks thanks to his high-caliber teammates who sheltered him in the mountains, leaving the lanky rider to make the difference in the time trials that book-ended the 104th edition.

Chris Froome put on a near-perfect performance to claim his fourth Tour de France and move within one title of cycling's greatest on Sunday as Team Sky tightened their grip on the classic race.

Sky, who have the biggest budget of the peloton, have now snatched five of the last six titles and came within a whisker of placing two riders on the podium as Spain's Mikel Landa missed out on the top three by one second.

Froome is now one title behind all-time greats Belgian Eddy Merckx, Spain's Miguel Indurain and French duo Jacques Anquetil and Bernard Hinault.

He is the first to win three consecutive titles since Indurain, who prevailed from 1991-95.

The disgraced Lance Armstrong's seven titles since then have been erased from the record book.

"I'm speechless, it's amazing," Froome said after getting off his bike and hugging his wife Michelle and son Kellan.

"The Champs Elysees never disappoints, there is something magical when you have spent three weeks thinking about this moment, it's just so rewarding every time.

"Each win has been so unique, such a different battle and this will be remembered as the closest and most hard-fought."

Colombian Rigoberto Uran finished second overall, 54 seconds behind, and France's Romain Bardet, runner-up last year, was third, 2:20 off the pace after both riders lost time to Froome in Saturday's final time trial.

Sky's team principal Dave Brailsford said there was no reason Froome could not add to his tally and become the most successful rider in the race's history.

"I think Chris can go on, there is no reason to think that he can't," he said. "Physically he has got what it takes and I don't think that's going to diminish in the next year or so."

Team Sky rider Christopher Froome of Great Britain celebrates with his baby. GETTY IMAGES

Sunday's largely processional stage from Montgeron — where the first Tour started in 1903 — to the Champs Elysees in Paris was won by Dutchman Dylan Groenewegen in a bunch sprint.

The 103-km ride was the occasion for Froome to sip rose Champagne with his team mates as the real racing began only when the peloton, who went through the Grand Palais, reached the Champs Elysees and the sprinters wound it up.

Froome's victory was the first one achieved with a gap of less than a minute and while there was no repeat of last year when he had to run up Mont Ventoux without a bike, he did have mechanical scares that his rivals failed to exploit.

"I think Chris can go on, there is no reason to think that he can't," he said. "Physically he has got what it takes and I don't think that's going to diminish in the next year or so." REUTERS

Each win has been so unique, such a different battle and this will be remembered as the closest and most hard-fought."

Froome

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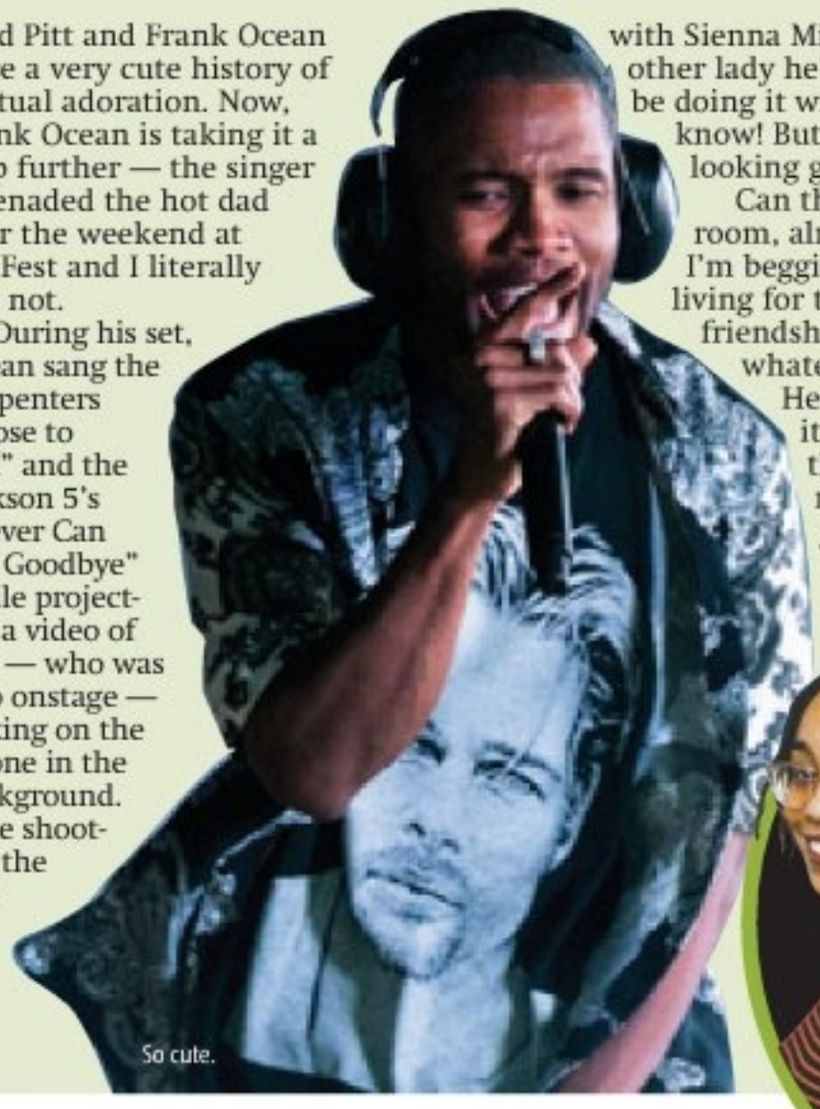
Frank Ocean serenaded Brad Pitt

Brad Pitt and Frank Ocean have a very cute history of mutual adoration. Now, Frank Ocean is taking it a step further — the singer serenaded the hot dad over the weekend at Fyf Fest and I literally can not.

During his set, Ocean sang the Carpenters "Close to You" and the Jackson 5's "Never Can Say Goodbye" while projecting a video of Pitt — who was also onstage — talking on the phone in the background. Is he shooting the s— with Sienna Miller, or some other lady he's rumored to be doing it with? I don't know! But damn, Pitt is looking good.

Can these two get a room, already? Please, I'm begging. I am truly living for this celebrity friendship, courtship, whatevership.

Here's hoping it fares better than Pitt's marriage to Jolie.



So cute.

the word

RACHAEL VAUGHAN CLEMMONS
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William & Harry are still sad about Princess Diana

Prince William and Prince Harry are talking about their last moments with their mother, and it's straight-up heartbreaking.

The brothers, who were 15 and 12 when Princess Diana tragically died, remember the last phone call they had with their mother before her death — and why they've been anguishing over the very moment ever since. Oh, dear things.

"As a kid I never enjoyed speaking to my parents on the phone," Harry says. "And we spent far too much time speaking on the phone rather than speaking to each other, because of just the way the situation was.

William adds, "If I'd known now obviously what was going to happen I wouldn't have been so blasé about it and everything else. But that phone call sticks in my mind quite, quite heavily."

Nothing can really describe how I feel about this, except maybe an infinite series of frowning face emojis.

It'll give you all the feels.

Selena Gomez is 25 now

Happy birthday, I guess.

Selena Gomez — a woman who chooses to make out with The Weeknd on a daily basis — celebrated her 25th birthday over the weekend. Which has me over here wondering the most important question: Selena Gomez is only 25?

The "Fetish" singer celebrated her first quarter of a century with a party that was so low-key and intimate that she just had to document it and share it on Instagram. Duh.

"Thank you for all of my bday love," Gomez wrote in one post. "I couldn't be more blessed."

"A lot of you don't realize how much you mean to me. I. Love. You. –think 25 is going to be epic. xo."

Kind of hate what she's doing with these dashes, but OK!

Anyway, happy belated birthday, Selena. Here's hoping the next 25 years of your life will be way more chill and less full of PDA, for my sake.

Andy Roddick & Brooklyn Decker are having another baby

C-list celebrities Andy Roddick and Brooklyn Decker — that's not a read, it's just a fact — are expecting a second child.

The former tennis pro spilled the beans that his wife Decker, 30, is pregnant with their second child during an acceptance speech at the International Tennis Hall of Fame Class of 2017 ceremony in Newport, Rhode Island, over the weekend.

"My wife Brooklyn… In a life full of good fortune, being around you has been by far the luckiest part. I'm a better human for us having met 10 years ago." Gross!

"Brook, I don't know how you juggle it all," he continued. "You're the reason why my personal transition into a quasi-normal, everyday life has been gratifying and full. Hank will someday realize how lucky he is. Our daughter that's coming will also realize she has the best mother on earth.

So yeah, they're having a daughter. Just another brave couple willing to raise a child during Trump's reign of terror. It takes guts!

So on trend!

The boys from 'Dunkirk' go to war

Jack Lowden and Fionn Whitehead were just happy to be in the latest from Christopher Nolan.

MATT PRIGGE
@mattprigge
matt.prigge@metro.us

In "Dunkirk," Jack Lowden plays an RAF pilot, while Fionn Whitehead plays a private trapped on a beach in the north of France. WARNER BROS. PICTURES

War is hell. Making "Dunkirk" wasn't hell, but it was no walk in the park.

The latest from Christopher Nolan is an immersive, intense film about the aftermath of the World War II battle, which ended with 400,000 English soldiers needing to be evacuated from a beach in Northern France. They were surrounded by the German army; home was just across the English Channel. Nolan tries to bottle up that anxiety and fear, and beam it onto an IMAX screen. That required its actors to feel just a little bit of what the soldiers faced 77 years ago.

For Fionn Whitehead — who plays the closest thing "Dunkirk" has to a lead: an anonymous private named Tommy who tries to escape the beach by boat — that meant doing things almost for real, with real boats and real planes and real locations. The hardest part for him was spending so much time in the water.

"We were wearing full battle gear, which was made of wool," Whitehead recalls. Besides being weighed down by a pack, by the heavy military boots that had nails on the soles, there was the cloth itself. "Wool just soaks up the water quickly."

Meanwhile, Jack Lowden had to get in an old-fashioned plane. The actor plays Collins, an RAF pilot who winds up being shot down, then has to be rescued as his aircraft sinks. The tiny, thin planes were good for claustrophobia.

"What amazes you is how little protection they had. It was like sitting in a wheelbarrow with an engine and a sheet of metal wrapped around you," Lowden tells us. And they were noisy. "I don't know how they spoke to each other. It's like a washing machine thousands of feet above ground.

"It's certainly not as glamorous as it looks," he adds.

Not that they're complaining.

"It teaches you not to moan about anything," Lowden says of the experience.

"It was just about getting on with it, really," Whitehead adds. "I was more than happy to be there."

Whitehead is a newbie, and he admits he was starstruck when he first arrived on set. But he found what Lowden found, too: No celebrity acted like one. They were all there to do a job — even Harry Styles, who plays one of the privates.

"There was no diva-ness, no one wanted special treatment," Whitehead recalls. "It put everyone on a level playing field."

That neither Whitehead nor Lowden are well-known, especially among American audiences, helps the film. It makes their characters blank slates, easier to identify with.

"You're forced to put yourself in the shoes of these young soldiers," Whitehead says. "The way the shots are done means you're practically walking with them."

You never learn anything about any of the soldiers you see — where they're from, where they've been, what battles they've fought before.

"You shouldn't need a backstory with these characters. The moments they're in are so raw and real, there's no need," Whitehead says. "You should just be able to experience it as they did."

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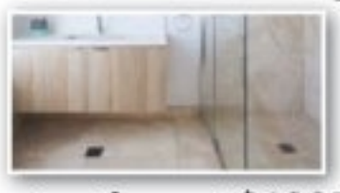

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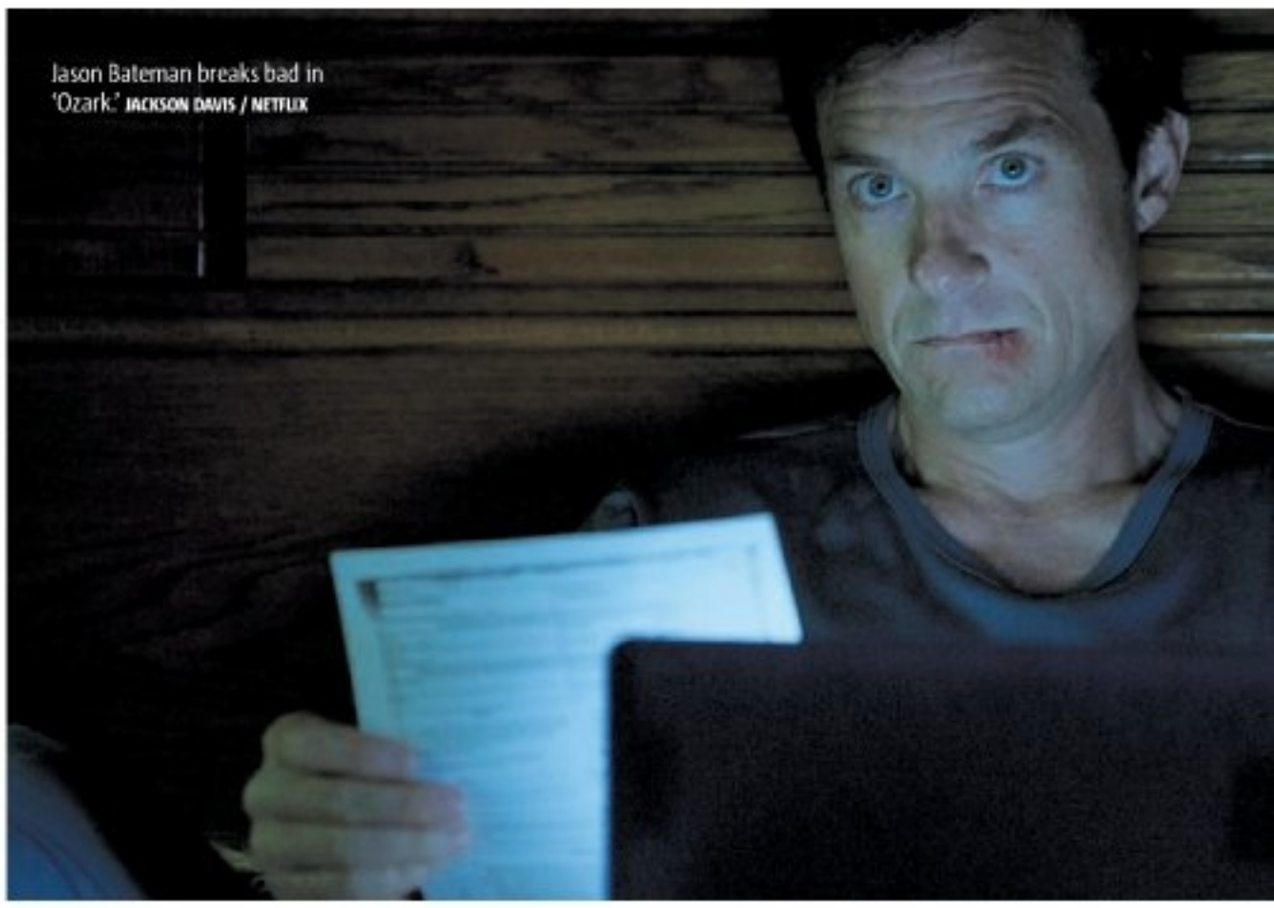

Jason Bateman breaks bad in 'Ozark.' JACKSON DAVIS / NETFLIX

Jason Bateman on how his 'Ozark' character stacks up with Walter White

The actor opens up about his new Netflix drama and how it compares to "Breaking Bad."

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If you tune into Netflix's new series "Ozark" expecting to see Jason Bateman play another doting dad like Michael Bluth, think again.

The 48-year-old acting veteran is taking a dramatic turn with his new show that has way more in common with "Breaking Bad" than "Arrested Development." Bateman plays a financial planner named Marty Byrde who's forced to move his family from Chicago to the Missouri Ozarks after falling into debt with a Mexican drug lord.

As you can imagine, there's plenty of criminal intrigue, action and drama going on in "Ozark," but it was the behind the scenes opportunities that really attracted the actor to the series.

"This came along as a piece of acting business and I said, 'If they're interested in allowing me to executive produce, oversee the whole project and direct every episode, then that's kind of in line with what we're looking for, which is an escalation in scope and scale,'" Bateman says. "I eventually talked [the head of Media Rights Capital] into it, and we sold it to Netflix and off we went. Unfortunately, I couldn't carve out enough preproduction time to direct all 10 of them, but we worked out a way to do the first two and last two."

Here's what else he had to say about the series and how it compares to "Breaking Bad."

What are your thoughts on all the "Ozark" and "Breaking Bad" comparisons?
We're obviously flattered to be compared to something that was so well received, so well done. I understand the basic premise and concept of it that might have some baked-in-the-cake similarities, but we have something that is its own thing. The only time we really talked about "Breaking Bad" was knew we didn't want my character do the same thing that Walter White did, where he sort of leaned into that criminal world. They did that so well and we weren't interested in stealing or replicating that, especially since my guy starts as a guy already involved in criminal stuff.

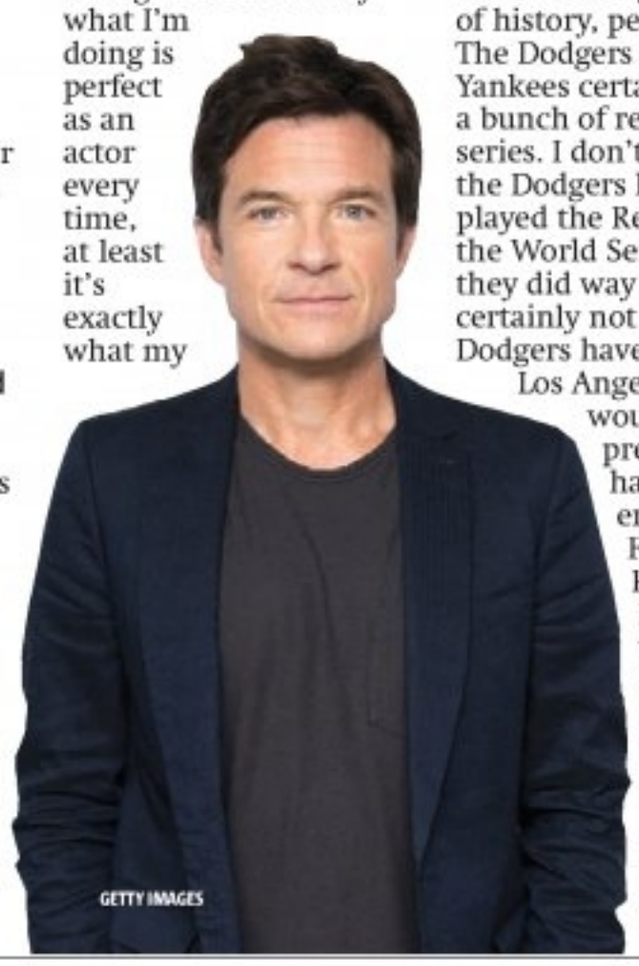
Do you think Marty would be buddies with Walter White?
They're probably both smart enough, arrogant enough and filled with enough hubris to actually think the other guy is kind of a fool. Both of them suffered from the same level of being really smart, but just not smart enough to stay away from this problem, and kind of overplay their hand a bit. If they were super smart, you wouldn't have a show, because they wouldn't make mistakes. They'd probably look at each other with a little bit of pity as really not having it as together as they

themselves have it.

Marty and his family are affluent city dwellers from Chicago who are forced to deal with backwater, rednecks in Missouri. The dynamic between those worlds seems to mirror the political divide between urban and rural life in America today.

It's an interesting microcosm, what's going on in this show versus what's going on in America. The people in the big cities clearly should not be underestimating the voice and the determination of the people in the middle of the country. They have a very clear idea of what they think is best for themselves, what's best for the country and they simply can't be ignored. We have to find a way to braid their agenda into the agenda of the coast and try to make it all work.

How did you balance working as a director, executive producer and star for the series?
Balancing all those responsibilities is not as difficult as you would think. The acting part of it is so comfortable for me, and something I've been doing for so long that it really allows me the opportunity to be aware of all the other parts of the process, all the other things that really a director needs to be focused on. It does feel like directing, period, with the added benefit that lead the actor is someone that is reading my mind with every take, and he's doing exactly what I want him to do. There's no creative negotiation and I don't have to direct him at all. It's actually more efficient than if I weren't acting in it. Not to say what I'm doing is perfect as an actor every time, at least it's exactly what my particular taste is looking for with every take, every scene.


GETTY IMAGES

As a big sports guy who's spent time in Boston, New York and L.A., would you rather see your Dodgers face the Yankees or the Red Sox in the World Series?
Boy, either one of those come with a great deal of history, pedigree. The Dodgers and the Yankees certainly had a bunch of really great series. I don't know if the Dodgers have ever played the Red Sox in the World Series. Maybe they did way back, certainly not since the Dodgers have been in Los Angeles. That would be pretty cool to have a Dodger Stadium-Fenway Park series. But either way, both those teams have to get past the Astros first. Good luck to the winner.

Chef team teaches Philly kids about eating from the garden

Many foodie adults would pay to cook in the kitchen of North Broad's Italian food hotspot Osteria. Now imagine being a kid with a golden ticket to learn from some of the best chefs in the city.

Osteria teamed up with the charity organization Vetri Community Partnership (which is led by celebrity chef and Osteria co-owner Marc Vetri) so they can share that love. A group of kids from Tanner G. Duckrey Public School at 15th and Diamond streets will be invited to help the a team of chefs plant their garden. And, in a few months, they can come back to enjoy the fruits (or rather, herbs and lettuces) of their labor.

Like many chefs, Osteria Chef di Cuisine Jesse Grossman appreciates the labor of love that is an essential part of growing your own food — especially while working with limited space in the city.

Osteria Kitchen serves up Italian cuisine. PROVIDED

"When you go Italy, everyone has their own garden," says Grossman. "It's all about growing what's around you. Instead of thinking about it in the mindset of being farm-to-table, that's just proper cooking."

For Grossman, the outreach work has become an important part of working for Vetri Community Partnership throughout the six years he's been with Osteria.

"When I first started with the company I wasn't in the mindset to do charity work," says Grossman. "Next thing you know I'm the first person to volunteer. It's a magical feeling to have the opportunity to get involved, and that's a magical feeling."

The Vetri Community Partnership is known for its outreach in schools throughout the area. One of the programs it provides is a Culinary Lab, where students learn professional cooking techniques and how to make the most out of their family's groceries. Grossman says that students from these labs have taken tours of the Osteria kitchen in the past, but this upcoming hands-on experience is the first of its kind.

"The students come in with these smiles that just melt you," he says.

Grossman and the chef team will teach the kids to plant a variety of herbs and vegetables in the restaurant's little oasis that provides the restaurant with essential herbs, greens, tomatoes and even raspberries. Grossman said that West Philly's Heritage Farm will provide a variety of shoots and seedlings.

"They get to come back and see what comes out of their hard work and time," Grossman says. "Getting to see the look on their faces at what they've accomplished, that's what I'm looking forward to the most."

For more information on how to get involved with Vetri Community Partnership, visit vetricommunity.org.

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The return of the power palace

The Palm reopens.

A.D. AMOROSI
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The Palm has now reopened in Center City and has a whole new look. ALL PHOTOS PROVIDED

When the Palm closed in 2016, Philadelphia's legal, political and celebrity elite went into a funk. Sure, you saw these same women and men, young and old, stammering around the Union League, pretending to like their food. But for the most part, the familiar faces and flashy power ties that you witnessed haunting the Palm nightly (going all the way back to its 1989 opening) seemed to go into hiding during its 15 months of reconstruction.

If you did see these Philly powerhouses, it was only to collect their discarded, painted caricatures that once hung on the walls of the Palm, which were all designed by artist Zach Bird. But like the dark wooden interior of the famed restaurant and bar, everything at The Palm was set to change.

"Let me tell you one thing," says Paul A. Sandler, the Palm's general manager for its Atlantic City division, who is handling the Philly reopening. "The definition of a great institution is one that realizes that change is necessary. When the Palm realized that it was time to freshen up a little bit, there was no trepidation that the time was right."

Only the legal eagles, politicos and celebrities would remain when Philly's power palace, the Palm, returned this week as it opened its doors to lighter, brighter colors, a somber but sparkling new bar in back of the dining room (rather than in the entryway, as it was formerly) and a smattering of famous Philly-faced caricatures dotting its landscape rather than crowding its walls like flies at a picnic.

Sandler is quick to remind me that when the Palm originally opened on Broad Street, it was the only game in town, years before the Philly lounge and restaurant renaissance of the mid-1990s.

"We offered then what we offer now: the highest levels of hospitality, anonymity to the celebrated so that they can be themselves, great steaks, lobsters and Italian food," says Sandler. "Plus we had that proximity to City Hall," he says realizing the nearness to the corridor of legal and political power that is Broad Street is one powerful draw.

The Palm became the premiere place for power lunch, dinner and cocktails. It was a place where as many deals were brokered as there were Grey Goose martinis served with olives.

Still, he and the Palm's CEOs are well aware that other big steakhouses have opened and that power brokers can be fickle. So they stuck to their guns

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and dug their heels into their roots. "By 2016, we could've appeared to look a little tired, so we closed, put a lot of money into lightening and opening the room and woke it up."

Going back to that "only game in town" quote, a year-and-a-half is a long time in Philly restaurant years, and in that time, alliances shift and diners forget, no matter how many important deals were made at their tables. Was the Palm braintrust afraid they'd lose the power clientele, and why did they choose to reopen this week without the loud buzzers, bells and whistles?

"Having spent the last 14 years in Atlantic City, I share my customer base with Philly," says Sandler. "Because where does Philly go when they're not in Philly? The shore. And if they're true Palm customers, they're coming into my restaurant in Atlantic City and they're telling me how much they miss Palm Philadelphia. So our return has all been word-of-mouth between me and the Philadelphia power players visiting in AC."

No sooner than its doors opened, Ed Rendell, former Philadelphia mayor and Pennsylvania governor; advertising magnate Marc Brownstein; socialite-investor Norman Cohn; Palm CEO Jeff Phillips; and multimedia personality Jerry Blavat hit the Palm: and that was Monday alone, lunch and dinner. "No, I can't tell you who has been here since, as that is part of the anonymity we offer to our regulars," says Sandler. "But we knew that there's been so much pent-up demand for the Palm Philly's reopening that we knew that we would be OK when we opened our doors, and that we didn't need red carpets or big parties to welcome us back."

Paul A. Sandler is the GM of the Atlantic City Division.

With that, the return of the Palm as this town's power palace is in full swing. "We chose to open our doors, just like we closed them," says Sandler. "With class."

The exterior of the Palm looks pretty much the same.

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College costs have gone from affordable to sky-high. ISTOCK

Let's face it — college is expensive. And by that we mean, awfully expensive. Thankfully, there are plenty of scholarship sites out there that can make paying for those four years a little more manageable.

We've rounded up the best six best scholarship tools on the web:

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With more than 1.5 million available scholarships worth over $3.4 billion, Fastweb is the go-to site for prospective college students. Not only is it easy to locate scholarships, it's just as simple to keep track of your matches. Users can indicate which scholarships they'd like to apply for, mark the ones they're not interested in and those they've already completed. There's even a variety of tools for students looking to explore financial-aid resources and read through career-advice articles.
Go to: fastweb.com

Cappex

Cappex offers more than simply merit-based awards. Students can also search for scholarships based on gender, major and even home state. The site even tells them which scholarships are their "best bets," depending on how hard they are to apply for and what the competition is likely to be.
Go to: cappex.com

Niche

Niche's search engine is extremely easy to navigate. Under the big bold titles of each scholarship, users can find a clearly outlined deadline, award amount, and bullet-point description. Click on the "details" tab below each scholarship, and they'll also find out if there's an essay requirement, minimum GPA or need for recommendations.
Go to: niche.com/colleges/scholarships

College Board

College Board's scholarship search section lets users browse through thousands of awards that honor both academic achievements as well as certain niche activities. Students can also dig around their site and find information about different majors, learn how to write a killer application essay, and even run through practice question strategies for the college interview.
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5 Things to watch for at Eagles training camp

The Eagles kick off their 2017 training camp this week as they prepare for the upcoming season.

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TIt's finally time for meaningful football.

Well, sort of.

When quarterbacks, rookies and select veterans report to the NovaCare Complex Monday to begin training camp, the eyes of a contender-hungry city will be on Doug Pederson and the Philadelphia Eagles.

Between July 24 and the Eagles Sept 10 opener, dozens of stories will be written and consumed by NFL-crazy fans. Articles will recount who is up and who is down at camp, pontificate on who may be a dark horse to make the 53-man roster and detail the goings on in the mid-summer heat in South Philly.

But what should you really be interested in during the 45 days until the NFL season kicks off?

Here are five things to keep an eye on:.

1 Health of the team

By and large the biggest measurement a successful training camp is the length of an injury list. If the Eagles can keep injury-prone offensive stars Alshon Jeffery, Zach Ertz and Darren Sproles heathy — among a bevy of others — it will have been a partial success.

Pederson has teased that the Birds will have a little more rigorous schedule and slightly more hitting this camp. Will that impact the team's overall health?

2 The rookies

Several rookies, like first round pick Derek Barnett and cornerback Rasul Douglas could make an immediate impact on a defense looking for reinforcements after last year.

Other rookies, like wideouts Shelton Gibson and Mack Hollins will be fighting for roster spots. And who will be this summer's training camp darling from the pool of undrafted free agents?

3 Joint practices with Dolphins

Toward the midpoint of the preseason slate, the Eagles will welcome Miami to Philadelphia for a handful of joint practices.

With teams fighting amongst themselves tooth and nail in scrimmages, seeing how Carson Wentz fares with his new wide receiving targets against an unfamiliar defense will be a good information gathering tool, as the first team will not play much in the first, second and fourth preseason games.

4 Who makes the team?

What will the Birds do with Nelson Agholor, looking to bounce back from a terrible 2016? When will the team cut ties with injured running back Mathews? Will they find a trade suitor for linebacker Mychal Kendricks or will Jim Schwartz figure out a way to get him more involved in the offense this years? The most questions in any area for the Eagles this offseason revolve around how the roster finally takes shape.

Carson Wentz will be ready to go when camp opens Monday. CHARLES MOSTOLLER

5 What are the workloads?

It's likely that reading too intensely into who gets reps with who, when and how often during practices at training camp is just a red herring, but it could also give a good window into how Doug Pederson is planning to use his offensive personnel.

Will LeGarrette Blount be the workhorse in the run game, or will he share carries equally with Wendell Smallwood and some of the younger running backs? What kind of rotation will the Eagles utilize on the defensive line? We'll have a much better idea come late August.

Is Phillies' red-hot hurler Nola the team's true ace of the future?

The Phillies young pitcher has reached midseason form after a disappointing stretch.

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Over six starts, Aaron Nola has pitched like the Phillies' ace, but can he keep it up? GETTY IMAGES

When the Phillies drafted Aaron Nola in the first round of the 2014 MLB draft they expected to have a big-league ready pitcher — and they did, as the hurler made it to Philadelphia just over one year later in 2015.

From there, Nola pieced together a respectable rookie campaign going 6-2 with a 3.59 ERA the rest of the way.

Pitching more like a rookie in his second year, Nola battled injuries and inconsistency in 2016, posting a 6-9 record and 4.78 ERA.

This season, he started where he left off his sophomore campaign and as recently as June 16 a 4.76 ERA. But then he found his change up.

"My changeup ... I'm feeling consistent with it right now," Nola told the media after he used the pitch to fuel a dominating 6-1 win over the Brewers Friday. "It's evolved. I really didn't have much of a feel for my changeup [when I first came up]. It's a thing I worked on in spring training a lot this year, threw it in counts when I usually wouldn't. That's what spring training is for and I think it helped."

Read about latest Phillies trade rumors online at metro.us

Nola, who turned 24 last month, has gotten better with every start it seems, which is exactly what a team wants to see from a young player. But after his impressive debut season teams got a book on him and his effectiveness plummeted.

If Nola wants to continue to pitch like an ace, he'll need to continue to adapt and harness a pro style. His performance down the stretch this season could determine whether the Phillies see him as a No. 1, or middle of the rotation starter moving forward.

"I'm real happy about the way he's come along, especially after the elbow issues," Phillies' manager Pete Mackanin said, referring to a lingering injury that forced Nola to start the season a little behind schedule. "He has increased velocity. His pitches are crisper. He's better now than before. It's really a nice jump for him to make."

In his last six starts, Nola has a 1.71 ERA and 50 strikeouts. He's held opposing hitters to a .118 batting average.

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5215 Miles, Timothy D Household, Clothing, Furniture • 3134 Mooney, Shana R Household, Clothing, Furniture
3045 Murph, Joel E Household, Furniture • 5143 Priest, Youlatitia Household, Furniture
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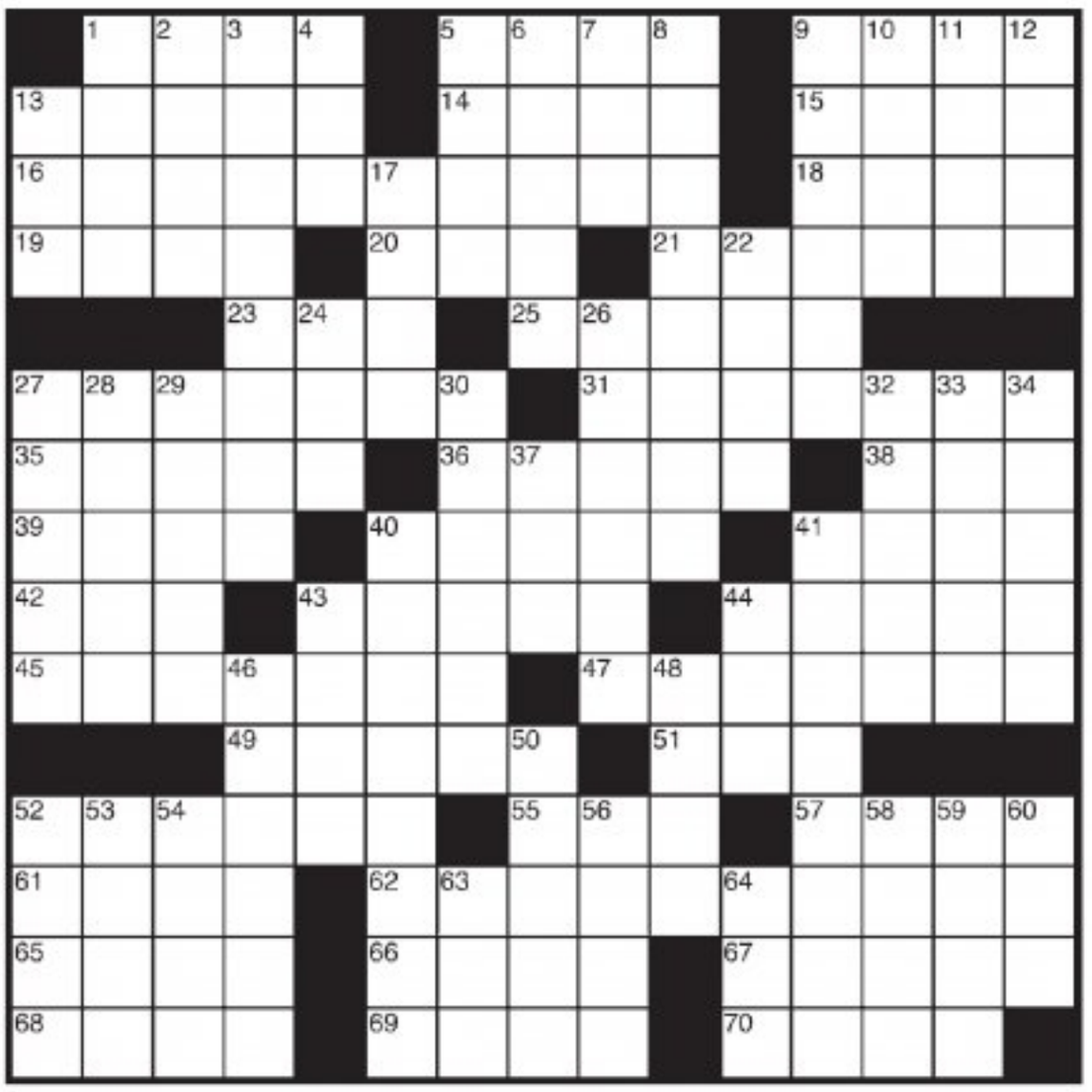

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Gemini Strive for perfection and present what you have to offer. You'll dazzle onlookers and gain support and popularity. Put your best foot forward and aim to please.

Cancer Keep your life simple, within reason and within budget. Overdoing it in any way will lead to regret. Make wise choices and don't fear doing your own thing.

Leo Engage in whatever interests you. Check the job market for something that will allow you to use your skills in new and exciting ways. Challenge yourself to do better.

Virgo Don't trust anyone with your personal affairs. You'll prosper if you are willing to take part in networking events. Don't let an emotional matter hold you back.

Libra Be open about the way you feel. Share your opinions and make things happen. You can make a difference that will boost your reputation. Personal gains will stand out.

Scorpio Watch out for anyone acting peculiar or being obstructive. Stay focused on whatever responsibility or job you are given and avoid getting into a senseless argument.

Sagittarius A little excitement will get you going and help you bring about positive change. Stretch your skills, knowledge and physical attributes to reach a goal you wish to achieve.

Capricorn Look at every aspect of a deal someone offers you. Practicality must be applied if you are considering an investment that has some risk involved.

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